

A MILITARY BRASS BAND STUDY ON BAKHTIN: STATE NATION IDENTITY AND CARNIVAL ATMOSPHERE IN A VILLAGE

Orhan Baba

Department of Musicology, 9 Eylül University, Turkey

baborhan@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores Military Brass Band's some musical practices in 1990s and 2000s in some villages in Southeast Turkey, where a stronger nation identity has been needed since 1980', using M. Mikhailovich Bakhtin's some concepts like dialogic and carnival. A lot of ethnical groups lives in the Southeast Turkey and languages are different from other parts of Turkey. In addition to Turkish, they talk Kurdish, Arabic, Syriac and Persian.

Communication is very important for the state. It wants the citizens to be good citizens and it wants to accommodate good dialogue with them. This is a vital thing when it wonders about continuing its existence. It uses a lot of tools (like doctors, nurses, veterinarians, agriculturists, Military Brass Band, some social aids...) when it contacts and dialogue with citizen in region people. While doing these activities, Military Brass Band accepts the risk of the change in traditional repertoire and structure.

A MILITARY BRASS BAND STUDY ON BAKHTIN: STATE NATION IDENTITY AND CARNIVAL ATMOSPHERE IN A VILLAGE

Dominant system or power places a soft pressure on the masses which are the subcultures of this system and which can be considered to be in effort of ruining the structure of the state. The state plays a role in forming any national identity. This process of identity-building often originates and remains within the boundaries of the nation (Brown, 2000: 11). Ideology has been reified by the music. We can use the Military Brass Band music with the intention of giving implications about political – ideological songs.

Communication has vital importance at becoming identity. Globalization, decentralisation and communication can have very different meanings in military terms (Cordesman, 2001: 389). The army who need feeling consolidate necessity for nation state while try to realize like carnival, it use the Military Brass Band as effective. Here I inspected the army activation in a village and realized on atmosphere like carnival. I used "participation observation", "interview" and "scan references" methods.

A carnival culture is not present in Turkey as in the western countries. However; national feasts, vintages and festivals may be reminiscents of carnival. The masks in carnival can be felt symbolic in the behaviours of the participants.

During the campaigns like "Army - State Cooperation" or this kind of meetings, realization of violation of the universal / modern aims which were built in terms of

musical meaning, and at the same time framing the axis change of this activity can be explained with "Dialogic" concept. During these campaigns, carnivals except for the tradition of Military Brass Band, using especially local instruments and melodies and using the folk dances, acceptance of the other dialect and languages are concerned with dialogic concept. Therefore, inspection of M. M. Bakhtin and some of his concepts is useful.

The army in Turkey has some recourses to particular activities or face to face relations with the local people to strengthen its communication with people. Together with all other means Military Brass Band joins the activities, especially in the villages. While doing this, it goes out of its own traditional - official repertoire. We can see here the M. M. Bakhtin's some concepts. The official discourses, dialogues, conflicting values, voices and clashes have a historical and temporal meaning. Not only the people and their deeds but also the ideas are included in the dialogue. The state which is present in the area not physically but mentally wishes to consolidate the nation state identity. But the moment of climax is the point at which the Military Brass Band is closest to the popular culture.

The village ground is decorated with flags, banners hung the trees around, the surrounding village houses, Military Brass Band and folk dance group, soldiers, children, the other people. All these come together in the place of carnival. The time of the activity is very important. While gestures of smile, suspicious and anxious glances and the feelings of curiosity and excitement are felt in the environment especially during the first seconds, the event is extra-ordinary for everyone. The folk dance group mainly composed of the school children often reminds the audience of the old times brings together past and present and present and future simultaneously. Although different in style, the lyrical local music performed by the Military Brass Band provides the physical contact between people who dance to accompany the music and the army, thus the "feeling of touching" increases sincerity and laughing. Therefore the carnival area becomes a place of encounter or vice versa or the place of encounter turns into a carnival area.

Thinking that the state's aid activities are only the economic ones may mislead us. In fact; they are a part of common civilization beside economic activities; especially since 1945, states have taken part in the production of social aids services. While the practices in social aids activities like the dispersion of the incomes, insurance, health, retiring, job and education services differ from state to state, practices of transmitting the resources to the ones really who are in need are different. While problems which can occur when giving different groups different social aids services may bring displeasure; these aids sometimes have a quality of being identity reminder and consolidator.

Carnival activities' main arena is a public square and connected streets to it and houses. The actual arena is the square. The carnival belongs to all people and it is universal, for this reason, everyone should join the friendly atmosphere of the carnival. The carnival arena acquires an extra symbolic timbre which makes it deeper and larger. In the all periods of developing of them, carnival funs as a complete has had a big effect on developing of culture. Bullfight, vintage and most of all other national funs has a character which means that it is clearly expressed as if it is a carnival (Bakhtin, 2001: 240). The carnival makes it possible to deny the idea of that life has a central construction and to suggest a mentality based on polyphony.

In 1999, as in other parts of Turkey, campaigns like Army - Nation cooperation were held in many villages of Şanlıurfa. Great organizations were held in the areas previously determined by the Governor of Province and an authorized army member. In these organizations, the aim was both to deliver the aids to right hands and make the state and the people in the region close friends, which is the main aim. Doctors, nurses, veterinarians, delivery staff and press and the military band were brought to the area.

In the first days of the campaigns, the people of the region were watching the Military Brass Band and the guest from the city in a shy and hesitant manner, keeping away. The elected head of the village, the imam, a teacher, and a few old men met and invited the guests to the tents generally set in the square in front of the school building. This place is actually arena. At the same time, the band which had taken place previously in a place which overlooked the square, with its normal staff, was playing a few marches and Halit Recep Arman's arranged piece named Turkish Folk Music Number 17. Despite the music and the crowd in the arena, rest of the villagers, particularly women, didn't appear but watching the arena from the far streets and houses. Almost 15 minutes later, as the band chief realized this, he stopped the band and they started to play regional songs like "Caney Caney, Lorke, Urfa'nın Etrafi Dumanlı Dağlar" with instruments as saxophone, clarinet, band drum, snare drum, cymbal. Other instruments in the band, although the songs hadn't been tried before, started to accompany the other instruments unison manner (all the musicians played the same part).

Soon, those who watched from away and who came out of the houses and streets started to come to the square and the crowd in the square started folk dances all together in front of the Military Brass Band. A surprising thing to the guests was that women and girls joined the dances with their new and traditional clothes. Therefore, the campaign started to be like a fast or a wedding day. This carnival atmosphere had a festival effect on the local culture. The press recorded this atmosphere. On the following days, most of the newspapers and T.V channels, while broadcasting this special event, told about the Military Brass Band in proud. Since that day, on events like this, taking the presence of the official staff, administrators and press into consideration, The Military Brass Band has been playing first "The National March" then one of the Turkish Folk Music pieces arranged and just after these pieces, it has been playing other regional pieces as "Kara Üzüm Habbesi" which had been tried before but not depending on the notes. tom tom, drum, cymbal, a Turkish folk music instrument named 'bağlama' and tambourine with jingles were dominant in this concert. Therefore; folk dances were guaranteed. So,

most of the repertoire of the Military Brass Band started to be formed with these pieces. However; the last piece of the concert is generally "10. Yıl Marşı" (march) or a nationalist and political piece named "Ölürüm Türkiyem" (a folk music piece in patriotic words) or closely "Memleketim".



Figure 1. Military Brass Band and a carnival atmosphere in the village.

The ambiance which music creates, while preparing the suitable, warm atmosphere, it makes the tolerance to reach top. For the acceptance of state ideology, the state may tolerate other languages, dialects and accents more.

In a State (Army) - Nation cooperation campaign which was held in a village of Mardin which has a border to Syria in 9 April 2008, the village was decorated with flags, welcome banners on which there was writing "Welcome To Our Village", "Army - Nation Cooperation" and the pictures of Atatürk (who established The Republic) were hung on the school walls and windows and the villager came dressing as if they were going to a wedding ceremony.

After the state officials took their places in the arena, the army brass band, depending on their experiences, first, played "The National Anthem" (1 min.) and so the aid campaign started officially. After the speeches by the state officials about the uniqueness of the country, the love of country and flag, welfare and cooperation, doctors, nurses and veterinary services did the activities like delivering the aids. It was the Army Band's turn to take to stage. The Military Brass Band first played "The Army Marche", then the piece named Halit Recep Arman's "Turkish Folk Music Number 17". After that, "Urfanın Etrafi Dumanlı Dağlar" which is a regional piece of music was played. Just after it the band started to play "Caney Caney". This fast folk song motivated firstly children, then everybody on the arena for folk dance. This song was played longer than normal and then another folk music piece "Lorke" was played uninterrupted without changing the rhythm.

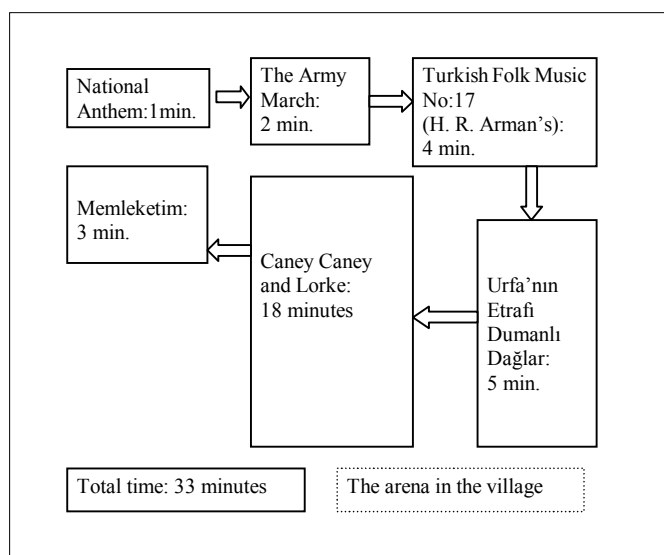


Figure 2. The regional repertoire of Army Brass Band concert and piece-time relation in the village of Mardin which was on the border of Syria in 9 April 2008



Figure 3. Dialogue with region.

The chief of the band who saw that one of the people who was singing the song with lyrics, invited him and asked him to sing using a microphone. Therefore the young man after hesitating for a while took the microphone and started to sing the song in Arabic. While some of the others dancing were singing the song with the lyrics too, it was clear from their smiles that the soldiers and the other state officials were pleased with this situation. As it was understood that the song was going to end, some of the officials waved the band chief to go on to the same song. So, the Band went on with “Caney Caney” after that song. The crowd, while dancing, was singing the song with the lyrics sometimes in Turkish sometimes in Arabic, even in Kurdish. Sometimes, the soldiers dancing sang the Turkish lyrics. The same performance, the same event, or the same music complex can serve a variety of functions (Kaemmer, 1993: 143). These two pieces which are normally to last for 6 - 6,5 minutes, lasted for around 18 minutes. With the attendance of the students of the primary school of the village, the band’s concert ended with a popular song which explains the love of country - Memleketim (My Land). When one speaks of a “language” as a code, one must think of a huge

series of small semantic systems (or fields) which pair with the signifying system in diverse ways (Nattiez, 1994: 26).



Figure 4. A young man is singing an Arabic song: Who is speaker (singer) who is listener?

Here where is official carnival area, the official culture confronts against culture of the villagers, with the official behavior shapes against the local people’s behavior shapes. In addition to this, it has historical – temporal means even of dialogue - the official and the civilian discourses and of the interfering values, of the different desires, of the different audios and of the conflicts (Bakhtin, 1998: 217). At this state carnival, more than one coherences fight in the people’s physical behaviors at the place, therefore, the state wants to harden the state nation identification card.

The carnival is not only the sovereign class’ permission at the borders but also it continuous beyond the its borders. However the time in which the contact is on top, the moment that the Military Brass Band’s in closest position against the people culture. At this top the of the excitement situation, the laughing as a human behavior becomes tranquil while reducing the seriousness and the formality (Bakhtin, 1984: 12-13, 92-93). Laughing has many meanings inside. Laughing at this coherence can reduce resistance, and the acceptance can clarify (show the situation). The smiling act at the very beginning in the area on the official and local people’s faces confronts, then turns into laughing when music and folk dancing start.

Especially at first confront moments which creates smiling, uncertain and anxious glances, curiosity, while it is an extraordinary situation for the local person, actually it is an extraordinary situation for the state responsible too. The different moments intersects here. Both those who represent and those who are represented intersect here in terms of their languages and meanings. While the time turn into place, peculiar to carnival changing and turning show them for “just in time (mention)”. Usually, a folk dance group of school kids, while showing the time at past to spectators, they make the past and the present meet, today and the future as in same time. The seriousness and the laughing pass through from each others at this intersection moments. The state (army) with the people, the villager with the official servant soldiers with the kids, the folk dance team with the Military Brass Band, the family of the

state servants with the peasant woman, the women soldiers with the young girls meet in the arena.

While the performance of the Military Brass Band raises “The touching feel”, the warmth and the laughing, which exhilarates the locally, despite big changes of the own orchestration, makes physical contact of the people with the each others. In this way, carnival open space (area) turns into confront place, or just opposite, the confront area becomes suddenly the carnival place.

The army, when establishing dialogues, aims the acceptance of its ideology and thus the consolidation of state-nation identity.

Dialogic is mainly the meaning relation between plural subjects, not a speech between two singles as in a normal dialogue. For this reason Bakhtin says the contexts of a dialogue are unlimited. Therefore, the term multi-lingual emerges depending on this. What identifies the meaning of language emerges during the relation between the speaker and the listener.

References

- Pierson, Christopher (2000), *The Modern State (Modern Devlet)*, İstanbul, Çivi Yazıları Press.
- Cordesman, Anthony H., (2001), *The Military in a New Era: Living With Complexity*, (Edited by: Richard L. Kugler and Ellen Frost: *The Global Century, Globalisation and National Security*), Washington D.C., National Defence University Press.
- Shelemay, Kay Kaufman (1992), *Ethnomusicology History, Definitions and Scope*, (edited), New York & London, Garland Publishing.
- Nattiez, Jean-Jacques (1990), *Music And Discourse Toward a Semiology of Music*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press. (Translated by Carolyn Abbate).
- Bakhtin, M. Mikhailovich, (1984), *Rabelais and his world*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- Bakhtin, M. Mikhailovich, (1998), *The Dialogic Imagination, Four Essays*, (Edited by: Michael Holquist), Austin, University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. Mikhailovich, (2001), *From Carnival to Novel, A Compilation of Essays About Philosophy of Language*, İstanbul, Ayrıntı Press (Compiled by Sibel Irzık).
- Brown, Barry A., (2000), *Bakhtin and the Nation. Special Issue of The Bucknell Review* (edited by the San Diego Bakhtin Circle). Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.
- Kaemmer, John E. (1993), *Music in Human Life, Anthropological Perspectives on Music*, Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Erol, Ayhan (2002), *Understanding Popular Music, The Meaning of Popular Music in Context of Cultural Identity (Popüler Müziği Anlamak, Kültürel Kimlik Bağlamında Popüler Müzikte Anlam)*, İstanbul, Bağlam Press.
- Stokes, Martin (1997), *Ethnicity, Identity and Music, Berg Ethnic Identities Series* (edited), London, Berg Publishers.